Historical Walking Tour

Bluemont School Neighborhood

An Eagle Scout Project by Chris Hill

Stop 1: BEHIND BLUEMONT SCHOOL, JUST WEST OF THE PARKING LOT

Athletic Fields

In October 1897 the City of Manhattan leased the public square in Ward 3 (where Bluemont School is located) to the Manhattan Athletic Association for ten years for the consideration of \$1.00 per year. This public square then became the place where the Kansas State Agriculture College (KSAC) athletic teams, and others, played their games. By the end of the lease period, the public square was needed for a school building. In January of 1908, the College appointed a committee to find another field. It was a slow process. Some people wanted to buy more land for the field, but the committee reported in June of 1909 that the area in the southwest corner of the campus was big enough for a quarter mile track and the new athletic field was moved to that location. After World War I, Memorial Stadium was built at that location in honor of the World War I Veterans.

Trolley Car Line

In the summer of 1908, W. R. West and Joseph T. West became interested in building an electric streetcar system. They asked the council for permission to install such a system. Their request was promptly granted. The company was incorporated in October of 1908 and given the title of Manhattan City and Interurban Railway Company. Workmen started tearing open the streets and laying the track November 4, 1908.

There was great interest when the first streetcar was unloaded at the freight depot and rolled onto the track. Around June 10, 1909 the first trolley car passed through the main thoroughfare of the city. The trolley car was greeted by hundreds of spectators who cheered and threw their hats. The company sold tickets at 24 rides for a dollar. This first track that was built began at the Union Pacific Depot, went north on Second Street to Poyntz, west on Poyntz and then north on Ninth Street to Fremont, west on Fremont and then north on Eleventh Street, then west up Moro to the College. Later in 1909 a second line was laid out west on Yuma from the Union Pacific Depot to the Rock Island Railroad Depot on Fourth, north up Fourth street, then west on Fremont to Sixth Street, and west on Vattier to the College. This second line was put into operation October 16, 1909.

By 1910 there were 4 miles of track laid about the city, with 6 motor cars, and 4 trailers to take care of the traffic. Generally a streetcar passed by any given spot every ten minutes from early morning until late at night. In 1913 the track was laid to Ft. Riley. Junction City had previously laid track to the Fort so it was possible to travel between Manhattan and Junction City on the Interurban line. The Trolley car system experienced a decline in traffic with the advent of the automobile. In 1922 the system was converted to gasoline driven streetcars to cut costs. This change did not save the line and in 1928 the Manhattan City and Interurban Railway Company ceased operation.

(Note that the street car line went down the middle of Vattier Street.)



Assembly of God Church

The Assembly of God church was organized in 1929 in Manhattan. The building was started at the corner of Juliette and Vattier, but because of the depression, work stopped for 18 years. During that time, the congregation met in the basement for services.

In 1952, the pastor along with the men of the church built the structure that is now at 700 Vattier. The United Pentecostal Church moved into this building in 1986.

Stop 2: Cross the Street, Stop In Front Of 813 Vattier

The hill in the northeast part of Ward 3 (the hill you go up on Juliette Street on your way to Tuttle Creek Boulevard) is Bluemont Hill. Legend has it that John C. Fremont named this Hill "Bluemont" on one of his explorations through this area. Bluemont School and Bluemont Central College (the school that has become Kansas State University) took their names from this hill.

813 Vattier- This home was probably built in 1927 by Laura Baxter. Laura Baxter was a Professor of Education at Kansas State Agriculture College. The L. R. Quinlan family lived here in 1928. Professor Quinlan was in the Horticulture Department. The Elmer Heyne family lived here in 1939. The dormer windows on the back side of the house were constructed in 1960. (Note the dog tracks in the sidewalk in front of 813 Vattier.)

Stop 3: Stop In Front Of 827 Vattier, Look Across the Street to 826 Vattier

Vattier Street is named for Dr. J. L. Vattier. Dr. Vattier was one of the members of the Cincinnati and Kansas Land Company. This group organized the trip to Kansas by the steamboat Hartford in 1855. Dr. Vattier invested in a great deal of Manhattan real estate but continued to live in Ohio.

826 Vattier- Probably built around 1908 by Ella (Mrs. Jacob) Remmele. Mrs. Remmele's husband was a baker.

GO WEST ACROSS 9TH STREET, THEN NORTH UP 9TH STREET TO KEARNEY STREET

Stop 4: Stop In Front Of 901 Kearney

Kearney Street was named for Colonel Stephen Kearney, who was stationed in this area.

831 Kearney- Alice Erickson constructed this home in 1910.

900 Kearney- Built by Jack W. Dimon ca. 1910.



901 Kearney- Benjamin Franklin (B. F.) Howenstein probably built this home in 1905. Mr. Howenstein was born in Massalin, Stark County Ohio in 1854. He came to Kansas in 1885 and first settled in Harveyville. He came to Manhattan about 1887, where he lived until 1900 when he moved to Arapaho, Oklahoma. The family moved back to Manhattan about 1902. Mr. Howenstine lived in Manhattan the rest of his life, except for one year spent in California and Topeka. While in Manhattan, Mr. Howenstine first worked for the Manhattan Alma and Burlington Railroad and later for the Kansas State Agricultural College heat and power department. Mr. Howenstine married Anna Elizabeth Shroyer in 1884 and they had 5 boys and 2 girls. Mr. Howenstine died in 1934.

Note the similarity in style of 831, 900, and 901 Kearney. These three houses were all built around the same time.

Stop 5: Go West On Kearney, Stop In Front Of 928 Kearney

920/922 Kearney- This building served as a grocery store and residence for many years. It was probably built in 1909 by J. J. Cowell. Mr. Cowell was a carpenter. Through the years, the grocery store was known as Gahagen's Grocery, Van's Grocery, (Lawrence A. Vanderlip, proprietor) and Moore's Star Market. In 1962 it was the site of a murder/attempted suicide when Millard Moore killed his wife, Veva, and then attempted suicide by cutting off both of his hands. Mr. Moore recovered, was tried and convicted, and served his sentence in the penitentiary.

930 Kearney- This house was probably built in 1910 by L. M. Salkeld.

1000 Kearney- J. H. Miller built this house about 1913. Mr. Miller died in 1915 and was buried by the Presbyterian Church. He was a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge.

Stop 6: Cross 10th Street, Stop On Corner And Look Back At 900 Block Of 10th Street

914 N. 10th- Built about 1922 by C.E. Buchanan. C.E. Buchanan also built 1016 Vattier in 1924.

Both of the other houses on this block were built the next year, 1923.

918 N 10th- B. W. Smith built this house for \$3,800 and sold it to Geology Professor Arthur B. Sperry. Professor Sperry became the first Professor of Geology at Kansas State Agriculture College in 1927. When a separate Department of Geology was created in 1946, he became the Department Head. Professor Sperry retired in 1953 and died in 1972.

 $922\ N\ 10^{th}$ - was built by J.R. Bunch . The Rev. Homer Wroten family lived here from the middle 1940s until 1965.

GO NORTH UP 10TH STREET TO THURSTON, WALK EAST ON THURSTON TO CORNER OF 9TH AND THURSTON.

Stop 7: Stop At the Corner Of 9th And Thurston

Thurston Street is named for Elisha M. Thurston. Mr. Thurston was born in Vermont and attended school in Massachusetts. In October 1854, at the age of 44, he came to the Manhattan area with a group from the New England Emigrant Aid Society, an organization that encouraged colonists to come to Kansas to settle it as a free state. After arriving here, Mr. Thurston joined a group of four other men, to form a town site they called Canton at the foot of Bluemont Hill. The town site had not developed beyond the dugout in which the five men lived when Isaac Goodnow, and the New England Emigrant Aid Colony he led, came to this place in March 1855. In April of 1855 Mr. Thurston helped organized a combined town of Boston from all the groups that had come to the area. When the Hartford steamboat ran aground in June 1855, its passengers were asked to join in the town building and as an incentive the town was renamed Manhattan.

Mr. Thurston was a surveyor, teacher, and attorney and was active in the effort to make Kansas a free state. He suffered great loss the short time he lived in Kansas; his wife died in October 1858, the same year he served as Mayor of Manhattan. Mr. Thurston died just five months later in March 1859, leaving his four daughters to be cared for by friends.



830 Thurston- H. (Harry) W. Aiman probably built this house about 1901. Mr. Aiman was a

member of the Kansas State College faculty, serving as Assistant Professor in the Shop Practice Department. He was born in 1869 in Burlington, Iowa and joined the KSAC faculty in August 1918, coming from West Helena Arkansas. He retired from teaching in 1938. Mr. Aiman was married to Belle Aiman. They did not have any children.

831 Thurston- Lou Welch built this house between May and September 1941 at a cost of \$1,200.

900 Thurston- Jay W. Ling received a building permit for his house in May of 1940. Mr. Ling was the manager of the Manhattan Milling Company. Note the very modern style.

Stop 8: Continue East on Thurston, Stop In Front Of 815 Thurston

816 Thurston- James P. Chapman built this home in 1939. Mr. Chapman was an Assistant Extension Editor at Kansas State College.

811 Thurston- Martin Jenson constructed this home, at a cost of \$3,000 in 1941. Some remodeling was done in 1943. Mr. Jenson was a carpenter. He was born in March 1890 in Weir City, Iowa. Mr. Jenson moved to Manhattan in 1916, and his wife Dagmar came to Manhattan in 1913. They had 2 sons. Mr. Jenson died in 1959, and Mrs. Dagmar Jenson died in 1970.

Stop 9: Continue East on Thurston, Cross the Street and Stop In Front Of 715 Thurston

714 Thurston- V. L. Graves received a building permit for his house in September of 1941. Vernie L. Graves was born in 1897 in Stockdale, KS. He married Eleanor Gail Deibler in June 1929. Mr. Graves was a Railway Express Agent for over 40 years, retiring in 1958. He was also a Boy Scout leader and committeeman. Mr. and Mrs. Graves had one son and one daughter. Mr. Graves died in 1985. Mrs. Graves died in 1977.

718 Thurston- V. R. Graves received the building permit for this home in November 1940. Mr. Graves built a number of houses in this neighborhood, including 714 Thurston.



715 Thurston- L. O. (Lester O.) Cofield received a building permit for this house in 1947. Mr. Cofield, who owned a lumber yard, built a number of houses as rentals. 908 Vattier was also built by Mr. Cofield.

Stop 10: Go Back West On Thurston, Stop In Front Of 727 Thurston

726 Thurston- In February 1941, Richard Allen Funk received the building permit to construct this home.

Stop 11: Continue West Up Thurston To Corner, Then Go South Up 8th, Stop In Front Of 1004 N. 8th

1004-1006 N. 8th- Built about 1943 for Nellie E. Schneider. Mrs. Schneider was married to William P. Schneider, a merchant and farmer. Mrs. Schneider was very active in the WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union), serving as local chapter President and State Director of the Department of Temperance and Missions.

Stop 12: CONTINUE SOUTH UP 8TH STREET, STOP IN FRONT OF 912 N. 8TH 912 N. 8th- Built for Elsie M. Makkil in 1943.

Stop 13: Continue South On N. 8th and Stop At Corner Of Vattier And 8th

730 Vattier- The house at 730 Vattier was probably built by T. J. Baird. Mr. Baird was a real estate dealer. Mr. and Mrs. Baird came to Manhattan from Cuba, Kansas and built this home soon after. The Bairds had 5 sons and 1 daughter. T. J. Baird died in 1911 while living in this home.

Bluemont School

Bluemont School was the fourth school building built in Manhattan. (1: Avenue School; 2: Central School; 3: Douglas School; 4: Bluemont School.) The original plan for Bluemont School was proposed in 1910. It took 7 months to prepare the plans, and on March 9, 1911, John M. Winter, a councilman, was awarded the contract. The winning bid was for \$23,914. (Not including heating and plumbing) The building was completed and occupied in January 1912. The building contained 8 classrooms, but no closets. The children hung their coats in the halls.

By 1929, the school district population had grown and the building size was no longer adequate. The Board of Education asked Manhattan residents for funds to enlarge the school. The authority was granted by an election held March 12, 1929. The expanded building contained 11 classrooms, a large gymnasium, library, and closets in 6 of the classrooms. The completed building was occupied in December 1929, with a dedication ceremony held on March 20, 1930. In 1941 Bluemont was the only Manhattan school with a modern motion picture projection room.

A third addition was made in 1951 that added 60,549 cubic foot of space to the building and a fourth addition in 1983 remodeled and refurbished the existing building, and added an addition for library, office, and special education space.

WE HOPE YOU HAVE ENJOYED THE HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR OF THE BLUEMONT SCHOOL NEIGHBORHOOD. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO CALL THE RILEY COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM, 565-6490.